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My View: An ode to Pete Simon, prince of My View

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At my synagogue, we have a My View club. Not really, but sometimes, it feels like it. More than a dozen members send in articles in any given year.

And, if we have an unofficial president of this unofficial club, it is most certainly Pete Simon. A retired Buffalo News reporter, Pete brought 40 years of accumulated wisdom to the project. Writing about family, friendship and work-related adventures, he did his research, interviewed subjects and created gorgeous pieces full of life and love.

More than a hobby, writing for My View was a passion. As his daughters, Becky and Jesse, would tell me later, he would spend weeks conceiving and preparing his columns. When they were finally published, he would smile ear to ear, in a way only he could.



Buffalo News file photo

He was not only that happy about his own columns, but ours as well. Calling and texting when they first appeared in print.

One year, my synagogue held a special program specifically dedicated to the writers of My View. It was on the afternoon of our holiest day, Yom Kippur, as an opportunity for members to share what they had written.

Listening to one My View column after another brought tears to all of our eyes, and most especially to Pete Simon's. He sat in our sanctuary the whole time like a kid in a candy shop. Afterward, he told me he would dedicate a My View to the experience.

He never did make good on that promise, passing this past November, after a prolonged struggle with Parkinson's. For a man who had a side passion for running marathons, the disease hit him where it hurt the most.

Over the years, I watched Pete battle through so much. We met more than a decade ago, when he had still been on assignment for the Buffalo News. He was reporting about an obscure Jewish event called Birkat Hachoma, where the sun is said to return to its original place in the heavens every 28 years.

He sat me down in the foyer of the former Kadima School on Eggert Road and asked me how I felt about the validity of such practices.

"No comment," I told him, something he subsequently put in the article.

We had a laugh about it later as we planned for his wife Barb's funeral. They had been very much in love and he was determined to give her the best send off possible. Her passing hurt him to the core, but he kept active as a father and grandfather.

At the hospital a week before he died, the stream of friends and old colleagues from The News was unprecedented. Upon his release to a rehab facility, one of the nurse's told Jesse, "boy, your dad was quite a popular guy."

At his funeral, an eclectic group came out to celebrate his legacy. Former rabbis and cantors of the community offered their condolences.

One of the things his daughters and I were happiest about was that not long before he died, he managed to sneak in one final My View column. It was an elegy to his brother David, who had died tragically many years before. He still missed him dearly.

Most of Pete's My View columns were dedicated to others. It was his way of giving back.

So it is in this spirit, Pete, that I offer a final one dedicated just to you. Wherever you are, I know there is still a twinkle in your eye and a My View column in the process of being written. May you rest in peace, dear friend.

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